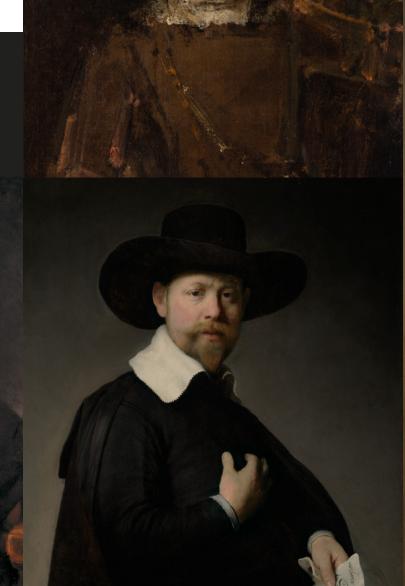


An online exhibition exploring paintings by Rembrandt in Southern California.









A collaboration between

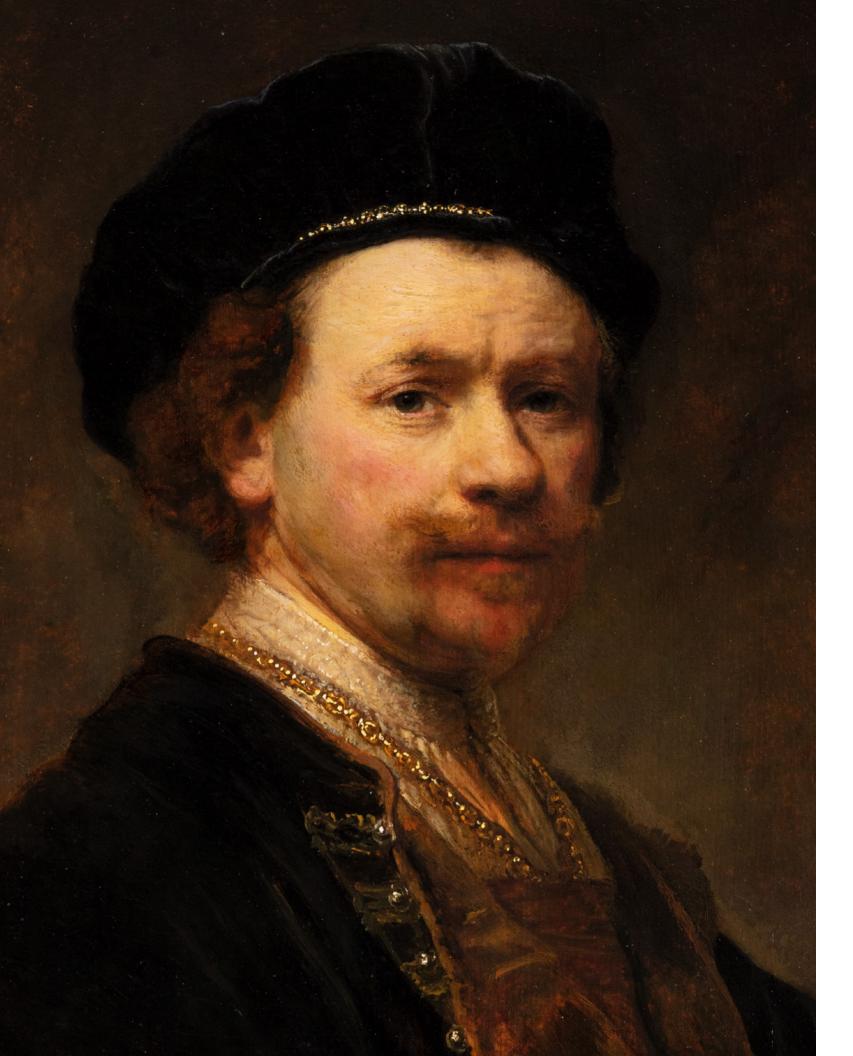
HAMMER











The Exhibition

Rembrandt in Southern California is a virtual exhibition of paintings by Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669) on view in Southern California museums. This collaborative presentation offers a unique guide to exploring these significant holdings and provides information, suggested connections, and points of comparison for each work.

Southern California is home to the third-largest assemblage of Rembrandt paintings in the United States, with notable strength in works from the artist's dynamic early career in Leiden and Amsterdam. Beginning with J. Paul Getty's enthusiastic 1938 purchase of *Portrait of Marten Looten* (given to LACMA in 1953; no. 9 in the Virtual Exhibition), the paintings have been collected over 80 years and are today housed in five museums, four of which were forged from private collections: the Hammer Museum, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in Los Angeles; the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena; and the Timken Museum of Art in San Diego. In addition, Rembrandt in Southern California provides insight into the rich holdings of etchings and drawings on paper by the master in museums throughout the region. Together, Southern California's drawn, etched and painted works attest to the remarkable range of Rembrandt's achievement across his long career.



Portrait of a Man Holding a Black Hat

Hammer Museum

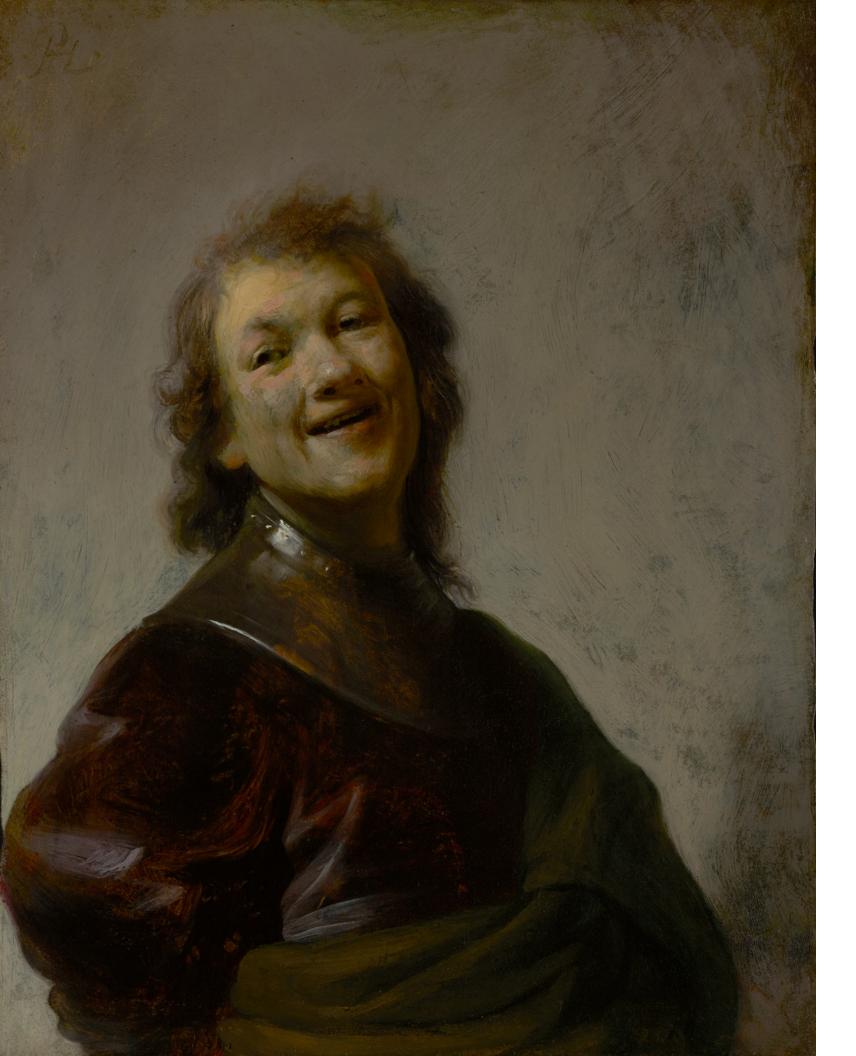
This elegant likeness is in many ways unusual among the artist's portraits. Unlike his depictions of conservative Amsterdam merchants from the earlier 1630s such as *Portrait of Dirck Jansz. Pesser* (no. 10), here Rembrandt lavished attention on the rich taffeta costume, with its sharp brocade trim and complex sheen. The intricate texture of the sleeve contrasts with the thickly painted collar and its artfully curled lace edge. Adopting a pose that shows the sitter's expensive accourrements, Rembrandt revealed his familiarity with the innovations of his Italian Renaissance predecessor Titian while flattering his aristocratic or perhaps foreign sitter. The sense of movement recalls Rembrandt's *Portrait of Marten Looten* (no. 9). Typically for this period of the artist's career, strong light illuminates the man's right cheek, which is rendered with fine strokes in a yellowish tone, while different shades of pale gray are used for the whites of the eyes.



Juno

Hammer Museum

Juno is the most commanding of a group of large-scale female subjects Rembrandt undertook in his last years. The wife of Jupiter, king of the gods, Juno was particularly associated with marriage and wealth. Here the artist employed an imposing frontal pose that creates an effect of calm majesty, which is reinforced by her widely spaced large eyes and even illumination over her face and bodice. As he often did, Rembrandt allowed the dark underpaint to remain slightly visible around the eyes while adding strong white highlights to the center of the forehead and the end of the nose. Light marvelously illuminates Juno's right arm, scepter, and peacock from behind, and glitters off her gold crown, pearls, and jeweled brooch.



Rembrandt Laughing

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Rembrandt practiced his art with great vigor as in the late 1620s, exploring the representation of emotion through expression and movement. His pursuits in etching, notably self-portraits looking in the mirror, and painting were closely aligned in these years. *Rembrandt Laughing* is one of a small number of paintings executed on a copper plate, similar to those used for his narrative etchings. Here, he portrayed himself in the guise of a soldier, as a personal *tronie* (character study). He stands confidently before a plaster wall, bare-headed and long-haired, wearing a polished steel gorget around his neck (a studio prop also found in no. 4), right arm bent akimbo, and brown cloak wrapped over his left shoulder. Dynamic, unblended brushstrokes in the face convey spontaneity, capturing a fleeting moment when, head tilted and teeth flashing, he catches our eye and engages us in his mirth.



An Old Man in Military Costume

The J. Paul Getty Museum

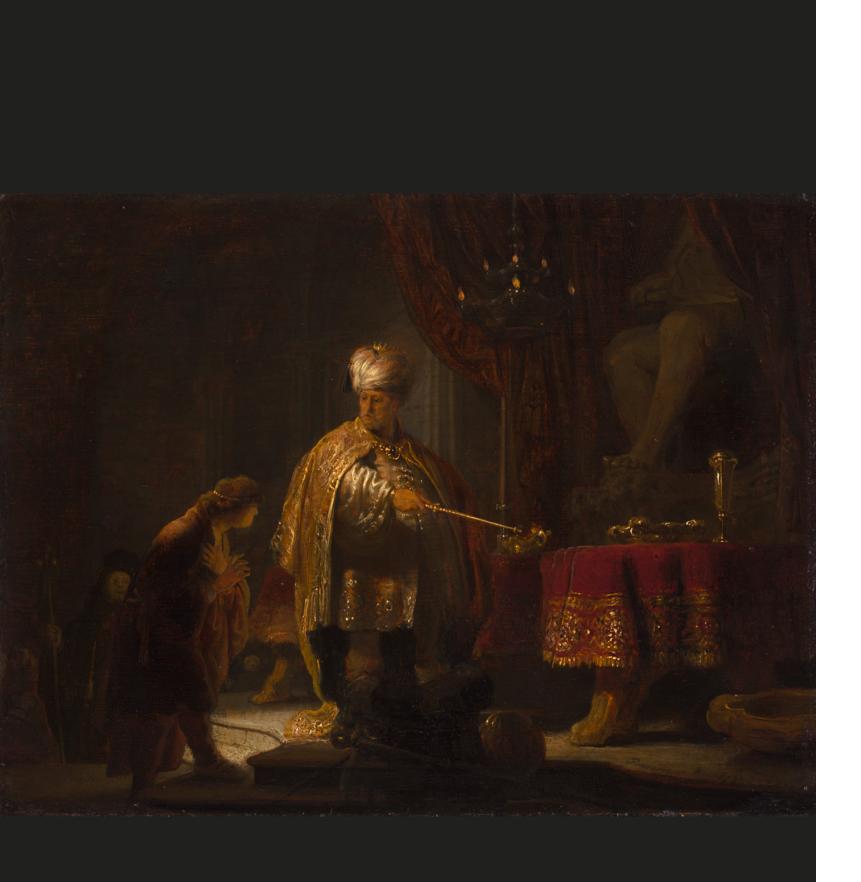
Rembrandt painted many *tronies* (character studies from life) of aged men and women during his early career in Leiden before 1631. The striking effect of this unknown subject derives from the intensity of his gaze and fanciful costume, which includes a polished metal gorget (also used in no. 3) and a tall ostrich plume. Positioned low in the pictorial field, the head is illuminated by cool light from the upper left, creating dramatic contrast in the face and a sense of atmosphere in the neutral setting. Rembrandt sensitively delineated the attributes of age in the network of blurred wrinkles, sparse mustache and beard, and furrowed brow. The sideward glance of the man's remarkable moist gray eyes, suggests he is listening attentively.



The Abduction of Europa

The J. Paul Getty Museum

With this dramatic interpretation of Jupiter's seduction of Europa, princess of Tyre, Rembrandt confidently asserted his status as a worthy member of an elite circle of history painters. While following the ancient Roman poet Ovid's account closely, his own inclination to express profound human aspects of drama are clearly present: Europa's fingers dig deeply into the bull's neck, and her backward gaze links her directly to her attendants, who register a range of emotions, from horror to resignation. The same youthful features and animated blonde locks of an unknown young woman (New York, The Leiden Collection) inspired the portrayal of both the princess and the standing woman in red. Rembrandt employed a range of brushwork and textures in this work, from the thin reflections in the water to the bumpy brocades and textured vegetation of the landscape.



Daniel and Cyrus before the Idol Bel

The J. Paul Getty Museum

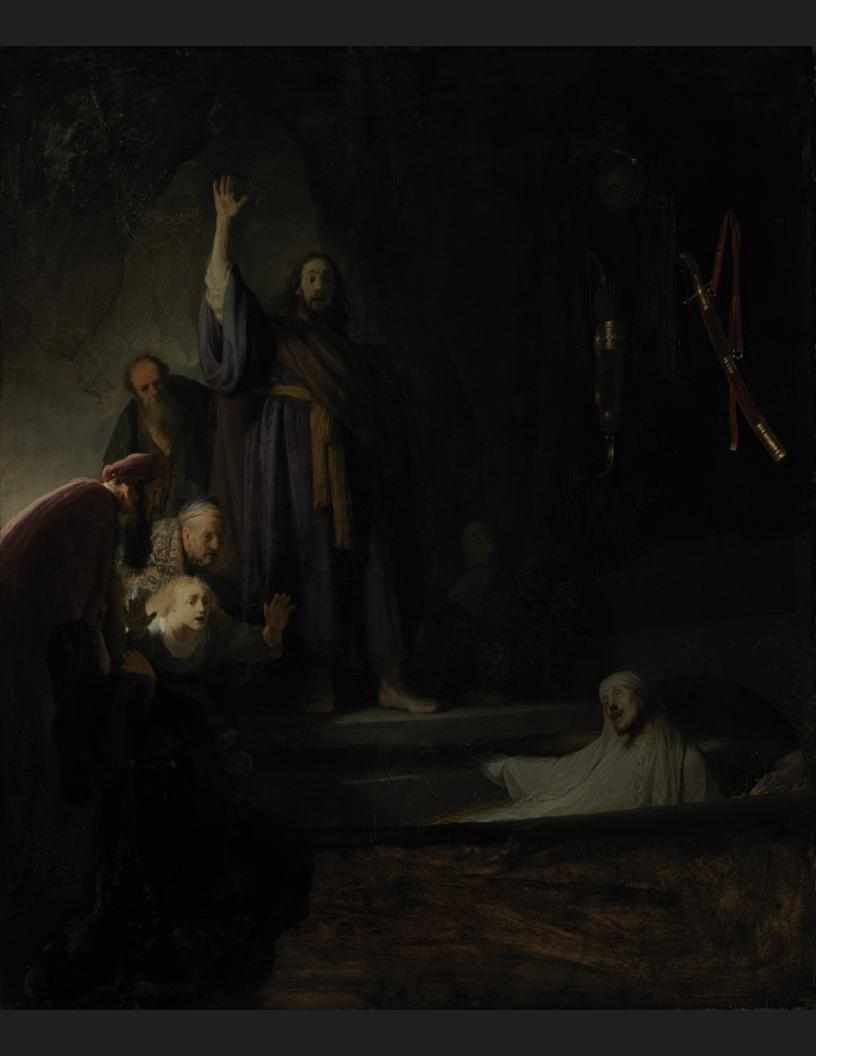
Despite the small size of this wood panel, Rembrandt captured the startling emotional climax of the key dramatic confrontation from the biblical Book of Daniel. As if on a stage, the over-large figure of the Persian king Cyrus stands at the center of an opulent temple. The humble yet resolute figure of Daniel, seen in profile, eloquently presses his accusation—that the king has been worshipping an idol—from the shadowy foreground. The profound impact of their exchange registers clearly on Cyrus's face. Rendered with surprising breadth and fluidity for its scale, the work features dim areas that are thinly painted while Cyrus's dazzling cloak is more thickly executed. Along with *The Raising of Lazarus* (no. 8) and *The Abduction of Europa* (no. 5), this jewellike work reveals Rembrandt's command of light effects and his vividly imagined biblical past, including fine details such as the tiny crown atop Cyrus's turban.



Saint Bartholomew

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Rembrandt was a sensitive interpreter of the Bible, and he portrayed its larger-than-life figures as human beings with fears and passions, uncertainties, and fierce convictions. In his late religious portraits, he used friends and associates as models, uniting historical subjects with the immediacy of the portrait genre. The individualized features of Bartholomew suggest that a patron may have asked to be portrayed in the guise of the saint (an artistic convention known as a *portrait historié*). Rembrandt sculpted Bartholomew's pensive face with thick, heavy strokes while the torso is more thinly executed. His drab left hand hints at advanced age or even death, contrasting with the roughly indicated right hand, which holds a knife—the instrument of the saint's death by flaying.



The Raising of Lazarus

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

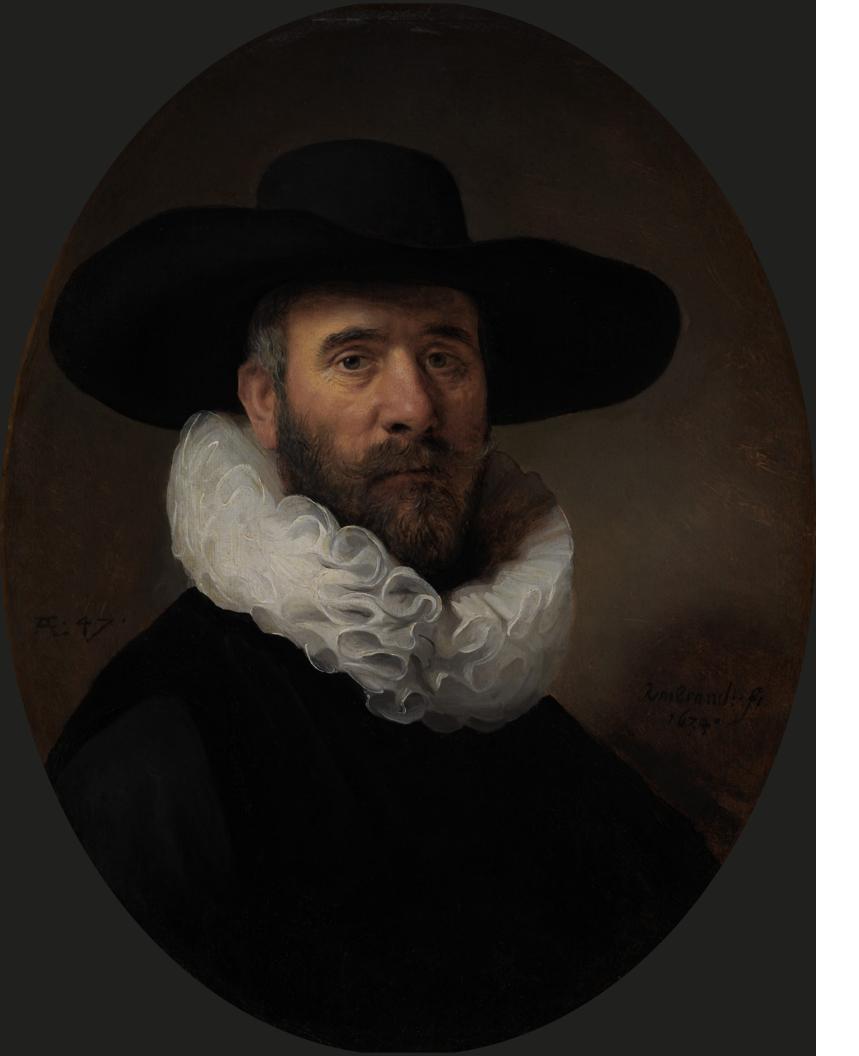
Rembrandt's dramatic portrayal of what is considered one of Christ's most extraordinary miracles—the raising of Lazarus from the dead—hinges on the connection across space between the commanding figure of Christ and the limp body of Lazarus. Typical of his early history paintings (see also nos. 5 and 6), Rembrandt used theatrical lighting and gestures to heighten the emotional impact of the scene. The beam of light penetrating the opening of the cave (at left) reveals both the miracle and the stunned reactions of the spectators. It highlights Christ's upraised arm and the white of his eye, spotlights the head and upraised hands of Mary Magdalene at his feet, and barely reveals the recoiling figure of a woman in the immediate foreground. The expressive faces of the old men are reminiscent of Rembrandt's character studies of the same period, such as *An Old Man in Military Costume* (no. 4). Scratch marks and raised golden highlights enliven the dark interior and draw attention to the glittering fittings of Lazarus's sword and other effects hanging on the wall above the tomb.



Portrait of Marten Looten

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Rembrandt proved himself to be a master portraitist with this imposing likeness of Marten Looten, a prominent merchant, who appears to have been interrupted while reading a letter. The portrait was one of Rembrandt's first commissions after arriving in Amsterdam from Leiden. His skillful rendering of finely diffused light and delicate atmosphere creates a sculptural presence in a neutral space. Looten's Mennonite faith dictated his rich but sober attire, which Rembrandt captured with subtle distinctions of hue, using both the black beaver hat and cloaked torso as a foil for the sitter's inquiring expression. The application of paint is relatively thick and opaque throughout, notably in Looten's hands. Fine, textured brushstrokes describe the bright side of his face while thinner, more transparent application on his left cheek allows it to slip into shadow. The low, dark form of his hat across the forehead and subtle differences between the eyelids contribute to the intensity of his gaze.



Portrait of Dirck Jansz. Pesser

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Working quickly and decisively, Rembrandt deftly captured the sitter's resolute character in this early portrait of Dirck Jansz. Pesser, a prominent member of the conservative Protestant Remonstrant community in Rotterdam. Diffuse light falls gently and evenly across Pesser's face, where the combination of textures and warm tones lends an accessible quality to the likeness. The strikingly free handling—visible in the thickly applied pigment around the eyes, the lively broken strokes of the mustache, and the sinuous edges of the ruff—reveals a more relaxed manner than that of *A Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat* (no. 11), painted the previous year. Rembrandt executed this likeness in 1634, along with the portraits of Pesser's wife, *Haesje Jacobsdr. van Cleyburg* (now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), and Pesser's mother at the age of eighty-three, *Aechje Claesdr* (now in the National Gallery, London).



Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat

Norton Simon Museum

The strong sculptural effect and tight brushwork evident in this likeness are characteristic of Rembrandt's early Amsterdam portraits, including *Dirck Jansz. Pesser* (no. 10). Intense light from the upper left creates a dramatic contrast between the two sides of his face and throws a shadow on the wall behind him. The light, which just catches the brim of his hat, brilliantly illuminates the folds of his white ruff, created with gray and taupe tones, but reveals little about his clothing. Certain key features—such as the subtle balance between the slightly turned position of the sitter and the volumes of hat and ruff—were important conventions Rembrandt used to create forceful likenesses in the 1630s. This portrait, possibly of the Mennonite merchant Pieter Sijen (about 1592–1652), was probably completed in late 1633 before the pendant of the sitter's wife, *Portrait of a Forty-Year-Old Woman, Possibly Marretje Cornelisdr. van Grotewal*, which is dated 1634 (now in the Speed Art Museum, Louisville).



Self-Portrait

Norton Simon Museum

Rembrandt drew inspiration from his own features and drew, etched, and painted several dozen self-portraits, many of which entered contemporary collections. In this painting, made at the height of his fame, Rembrandt tucks his left hand into the front of a garment that is an imaginative variation on a sixteenth-century tabard, or gown, lined in red. The heavy gold chain, which alludes to receipt of a high honor, is an invented accolade intended to emphasize his status. The highly convincing physical presence and the play of light over his features are characteristic of his approach in the late 1630s. The delicate, descriptive brushwork in the face contrasts with the more broadly handled drapery. His still, monumental form and steady gaze convey self-assurance and distinction.



Portrait of a Boy

Norton Simon Museum

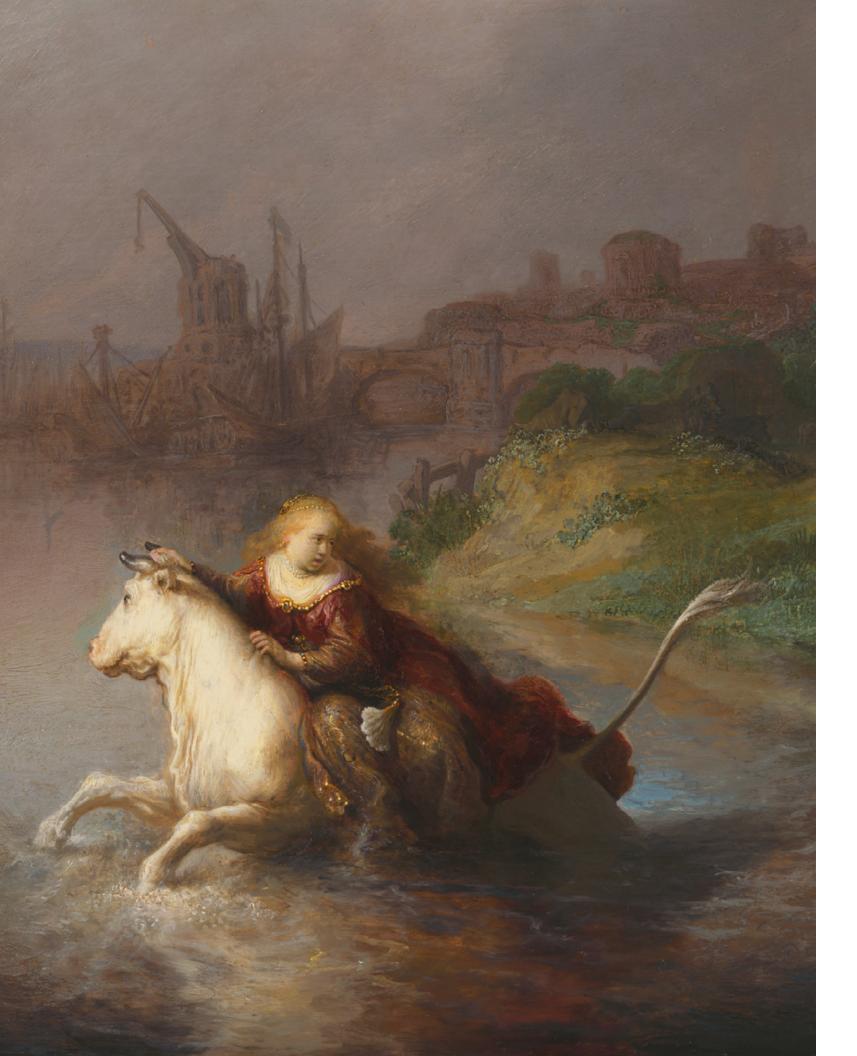
The directness and sensitivity of Rembrandt's portrayal of this engaging young boy in semi-historical dress led to its previous identification as the artist's son, Titus. Although that identification is now rejected, the identity of the sitter and function of the painting, either as a fragment of a larger group portrait or an independent likeness, remains undetermined. The unfinished state of the painting permits insight into Rembrandt's technique: worked over a mid-brown priming, individual broad strokes whose beginning and end are clearly visible suggest the general form of the boy's torso. Finely rendered strokes model the more fully described face, and red plumes on the soft black hat are quite freely handled. The loosely executed form on the boy's left arm may be an animal, possibly a monkey. Rembrandt adopted this frontal pose in later monumental figures such as *Saint Bartholomew* (no. 7) and *Juno* (no. 2).



Saint Bartholomew

Timken Museum of Art

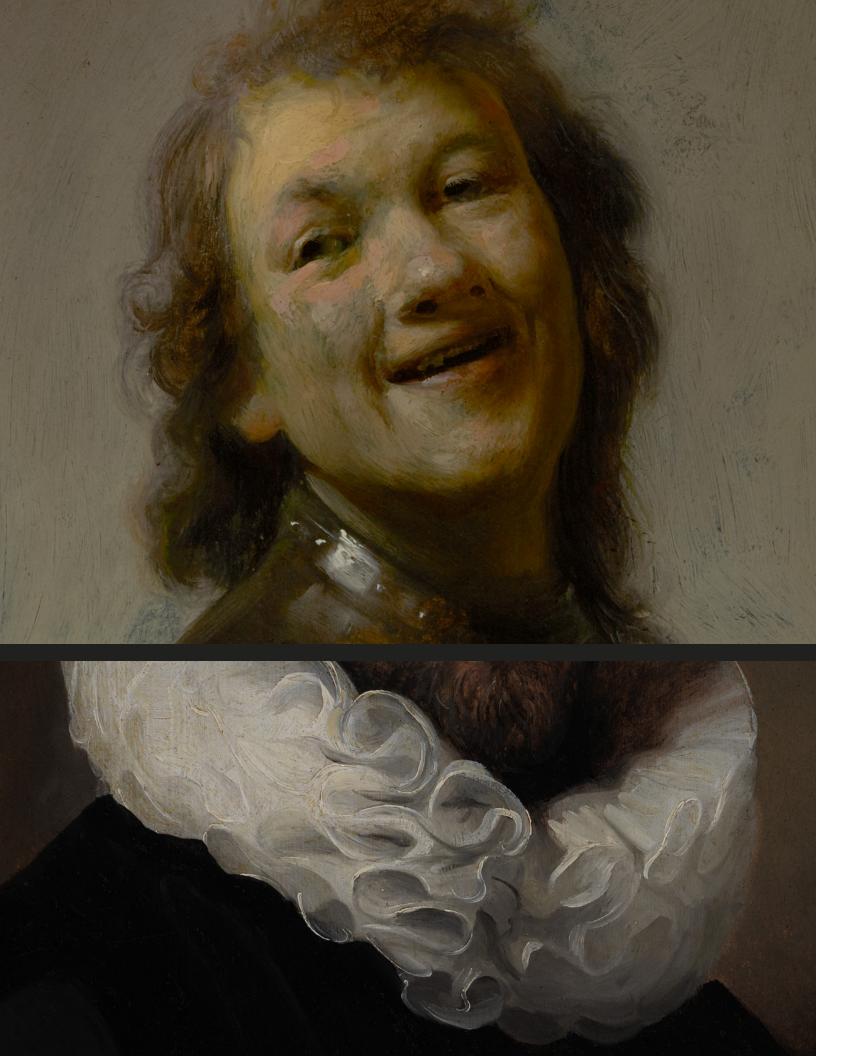
In the latter part of his career, Rembrandt undertook psychologically penetrating portraits of saints and apostles, perhaps as an artistic investigation of spirituality. This animated portrayal is one of the largest of a group that includes another introspective version of *Saint Bartholomew* (no. 7). Here the dynamic pose of the apostle who preached the Gospel in Asia attests to the physicality of his personality and the zeal of his mission. In contrast to his assertive pose, he holds a knife, the instrument of his martyrdom, with relaxed ease. The broad, descriptive strokes of his hand and cuff stand out against his roughly indicated cloak. Textured brushwork in the face, in which the dark undertones play an important role in modeling, contributes to the lively effect.



Rembrandt At Work

The remarkable group of Rembrandt paintings in Southern California museums, representing nearly every phase of the artist's long and productive career, offers a rich opportunity to consider some of the key facets of his intriguing working method.

An essay by Anne T. Woollett, Curator, Department of Paintings, The J. Paul Getty Museum



Tronies and Portraits

Rembrandt revitalized the traditional practice of portraiture by infusing his likenesses with a greater plastic or sculptural quality, the suggestion of animation, and far greater immediacy than his predecessors. His exploration of physiognomy, often through *tronies*, or character studies from life (see nos. 3 and 4 in the virtual exhibition), and self-portraits (no. 12) or a combination of the two (top left) prepared the way for his future innovations in portraiture and multifigure historical subjects. Portraiture was the most lucrative aspect of his work—particularly at the outset of his career in Amsterdam—serving not only to attract new clients but also patrons for larger civic projects, such as group portraits. His early patrons included associates of the art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh, with whom Rembrandt established his Amsterdam studio. *Marten Looten* (no. 9) was a member of the conservative Mennonite community, as was Uylenburgh, while Pieter Sijen (the possible sitter of no. 11) lent Uylenburgh money. Other patrons were the leading merchant and explorer Jacques Specx (1585-1652), who likely owned *The Abduction of Europa* (no. 5). *Dirck Jansz. Pesser* (no. 10) and the richly attired, unknown *Man Holding a Black Hat* (no. 1) attest to Rembrandt's fame, which brought clients from other cities, including Rotterdam, and prominent visitors to his studio.

In portraits, important indicators of status, such as a sitter's costume, were carefully rendered. The play of light on fabric, even a dark material such as the cloak worn by Marten Looten (no. 9), was essential for suggesting volume. Projecting elements such as hats (whose contours almost always show slight corrections by the artist), along with the arcing curves of white ruffs created from grays and beiges and outlined with sinuous strokes (bottom left), also contribute to the sense of presence and animation.

Top – Rembrandt Laughing (detail of no. 3). The J. Paul Getty Museum

Bottom – *Portrait of Dirck Jan Pesser* (detail of no. 10), showing the fluid strokes edging the ruff. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Frances and Armand Hammer Purchase Fund.

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Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA





Faces and Features

Rembrandt placed the greatest emphasis on the faces of his subjects. In his early studies, such as *An Old Man in Military Costume* (no. 4), he strove to create dramatic areas of light and shade across the countenance of his sitter as well as a sense of atmosphere around the head. Rembrandt evidently relished the challenge of creating the transition to shadow on the far side of the face, and even the effect of atmosphere around a head (compare, for example, the cool atmosphere around the old man (no. 4) and Marten Looten (no. 9) and the delicate illumination surrounding Dirck Jansz. Pesser (no. 10). Areas in strong light are generally more thickly painted, while those in shadow are more thinly executed. By employing the subtle technique of using radiating brushstrokes in the neutral background around the head and shoulders (clearly visible when viewed from a slight angle), Rembrandt effectively made the head of his subject more prominent. This approach is most visible in *Portrait of Marten Looten* (no. 8) and in *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat* (no. 11.)

A close look at the portraits reveals how subtly Rembrandt maneuvered individual features, creating a series of imbalances that resolve into a convincing likeness: often one eye is higher than the other and differs in size. Slight variations in the color of the pupil and the size of the iris allow the eye to recede slightly. A thin, pale beige stroke suggests moisture (see, for example, *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat*, no. 11 (left); *Portrait of Dirck Jansz. Pesser*, no. 10; and *Portrait of a Man Holding a Black Hat*, no. 1). Later portrayals of historical and religious figures, such as *Juno* (no. 2) and *Saint Bartholomew* (nos. 7 and 14), were probably inspired by contemporary men and women with whom Rembrandt was acquainted. In these late works, Rembrandt allowed the dark underlayer from the earliest stages of painting to remain visible, contributing to the appearance of the eye situated within the socket (right).

Left – A small amount of white suggests moisture at the rim of the eye in *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat* (detail of no. 11). Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena

Right – The dark underlayer helps define the eye socket in *Saint Bartholomew* (detail of no. 14). Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, San Diego



Materials

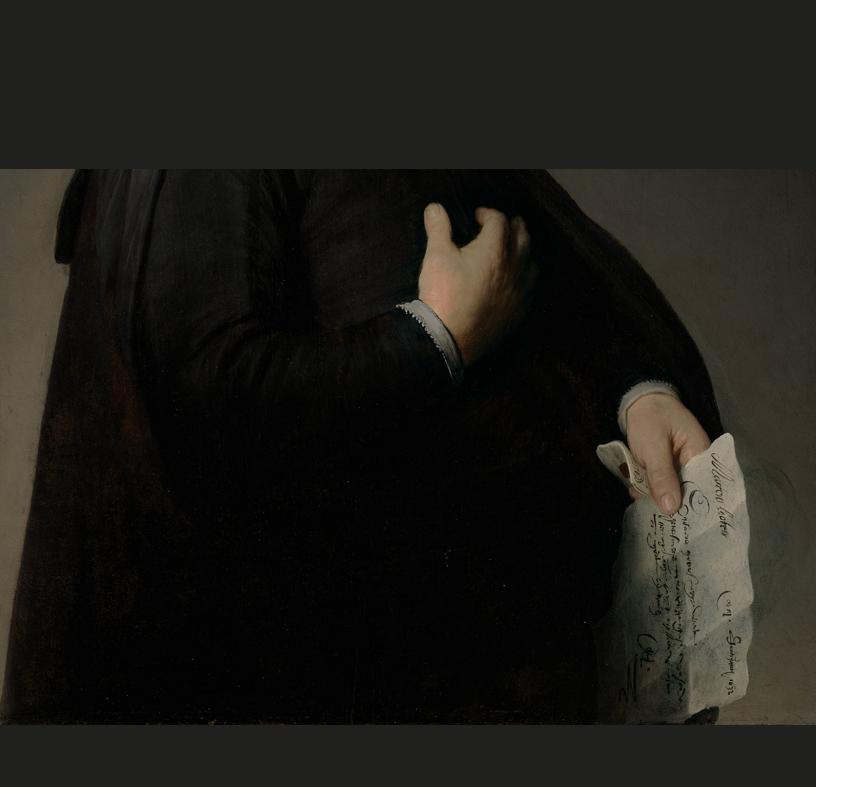
Rembrandt used traditional materials, sometimes in surprising ways, to create striking visual effects. Innovative and spontaneous, the artist's brushwork reveals the speed with which he applied the paint as well as his changes and corrections during the execution of a work. Particularly in his early career, Rembrandt utilized oak panels, a traditional support for northern European artists that served to highlight his fine brushwork and jewel-like palette. For example, he used a single, wide, radial-cut plank for *The Raising of Lazarus* (no. 8). Throughout his career, but particularly before about 1632, Rembrandt repurposed his supports, abandoning compositions in order to paint new ones. A multi-figure scene lies beneath *Rembrandt Laughing* (no. 3), and he reused an oak panel upon which he had already started a male portrait by turning it 180 degrees before painting *An Old Man in Military Costume* (no. 4), visible in the x-radiograph (left).

Rembrandt also purchased canvas in standard widths. While oval formats were popular for bust-length portraits in the 1630s—he used one for *Portrait of Dirck Jansz. Pesser* (no. 10)—they were also in style during the 1700s, when rectangular Dutch portraits of the previous century were cut into oval shapes. It is sometimes difficult to determine with certainty the original shape of a portrait (for example, *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat*, no. 11).

Rembrandt occasionally allowed the preparatory, or ground, layer to show through in certain areas, making use of its color. The salmon-tinted layer is visible in the right ruff of *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat* (no. 11). Somewhat unusually, the area left in reserve for the right edge of the hat brim was left uncorrected after the artist reduced the extent of the brim. Although secondary in importance to the face, the visual weight and distribution of the body were important aspects of the portrait.

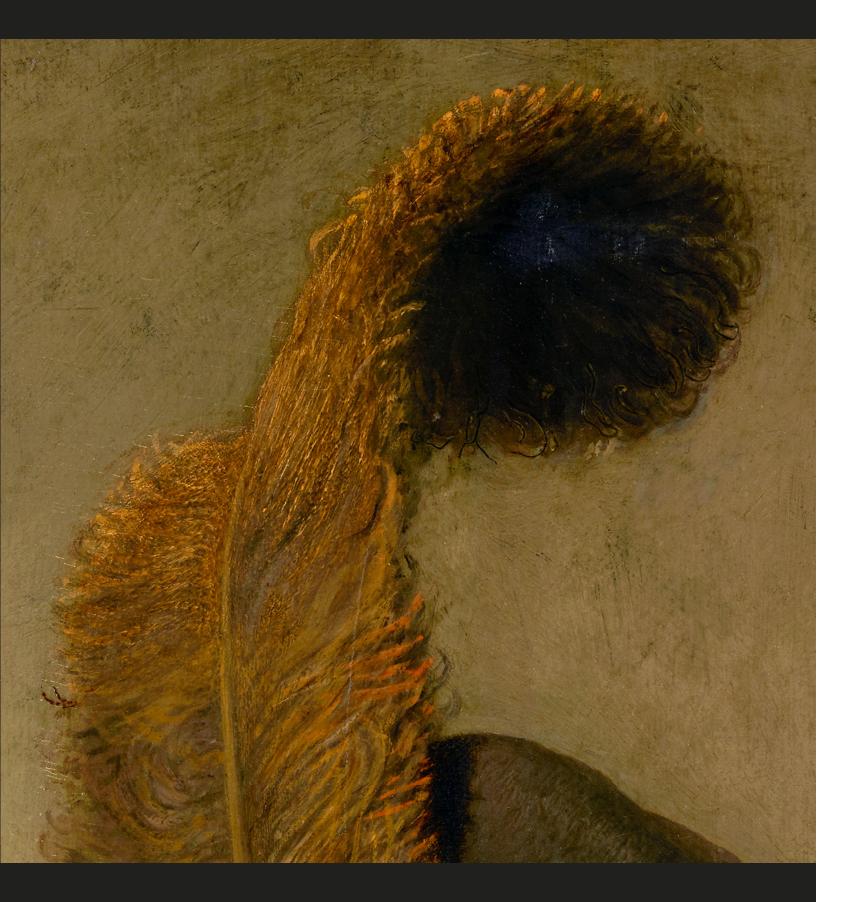
X-radiograph of *An Old Man in Military Costume* (rotated 180 degrees) shows another, younger, male figure beneath the upper image.

The J. Paul Getty Museum.



Changes (Pentimenti)

Rembrandt frequently adjusted the contours of the shoulders of his sitters, as in *An Old Man in Military Costume* (no. 4) and his *Self-Portrait* (no. 12). Sometimes he made dramatic changes to a composition, as in *The Raising of Lazarus* (no. 8), the extent of which is only visible though technical means, such as X-radiography. Other adjustments, known as pentimenti, are more obvious: for example, he extended the tip of his sitter's right thumb in *Portrait of Marten Looten* (no. 9), tightened the contours of his cloak along the right side, and reduced the drapery along the sitter's extended arm, perhaps so as not to detract from the open letter (left). During the execution of *Juno* (no. 2), perhaps in response to the demands of his patron, he converted the goddess's right arm from a downward position resting on a table or ledge (as on the left), to rest commandingly on a scepter. The remainder of the red cloth on the table that originally extended across the front of *Juno* (no. 2) can still be seen.

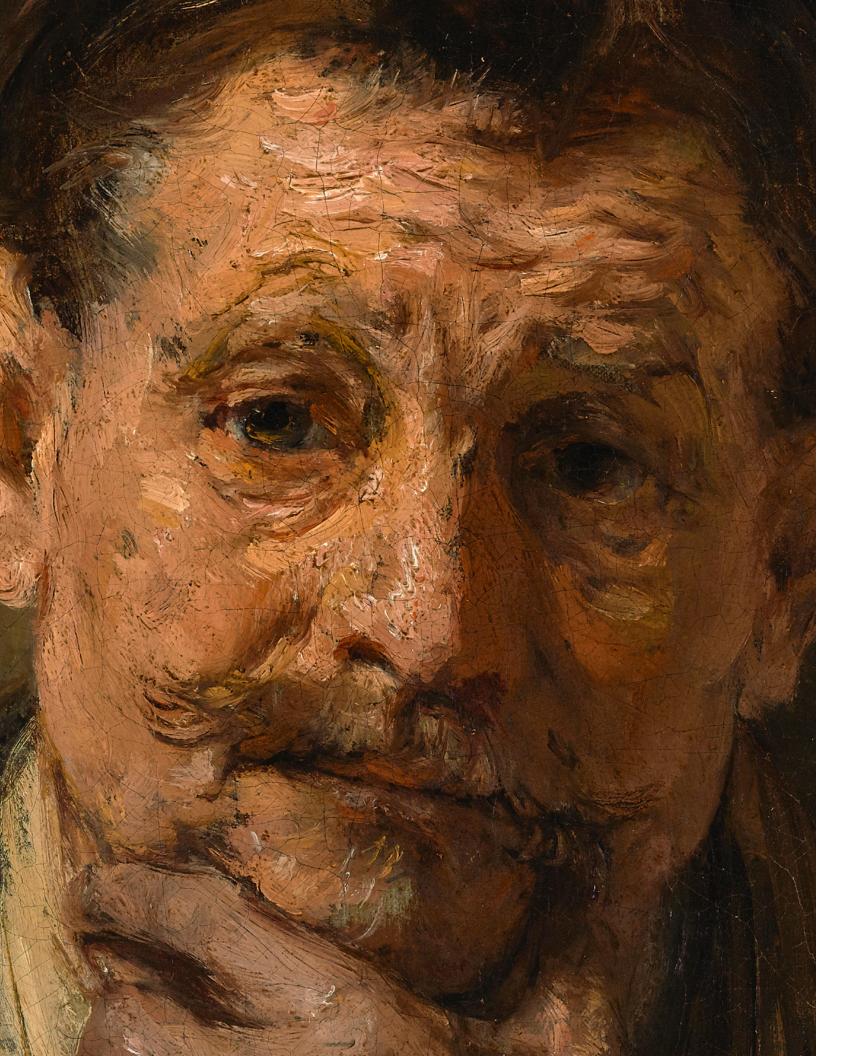


Paint: Gouging and the Rough Manner

From the beginning of his career, Rembrandt paid particular attention to texture and the quality of paint. Among his works in Southern California are a number of good examples of the often-imitated practice of gouging in the wet paint with the wooden end of the brush. He used this technique sparingly, such as in the tip of the feather in *An Old Man in Military Costume* (no. 4) and in the head and shoulder of *Portrait of a Man Holding a Black Hat* (no. 1), or where he sought to create sophisticated light effects.

In The Raising of Lazarus (no. 8) gouging is evident in the face of one of the kneeling men and was used to create the stringy foliage near Christ. The artist often juxtaposed different types of brushwork in adjacent areas. This is evident throughout *The Abduction of Europa* (no. 5), in which he employed slightly textured and smooth applications of paint. However, it is clearest in late works such as the portrayals of Saint Bartholomew (no. 7, as seen on page 42, and no.14), where the thick and roughly painted faces contrast with the much more thinly or summarily painted torsos.

Rembrandt painted his apostles and evangelists in what his contemporaries called the *grof manier*, or rough manner. The expression was used by artists and critics alike to refer to the visible brushstroke, a dynamic and virtuoso technique, and a surface that was best seen from a distance. The broad and quite varied handling of his late style, however, was distinct from the elegant, polished style preferred by Amsterdam's elite around 1660. Committed to his singular artistic vision, Rembrandt continued to explore the scope of a rough and varied surface through the final years of his life, pushing the expressive possibilities of paint to its most evocative ends.



About Anne T. Woollett

Anne joined the Getty Museum in 1998 and specializes in Flemish, Dutch, and German painting before 1800. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University, and her research interests include the works of Rubens and Rembrandt, collaboration in painting, collecting Netherlandish art in the Western United States, and the technical study of works of art.



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